



DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER • 815 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

h D. Dearnaley, News Director
E. Vetter, Deputy News Director

Property of
Graduate Theological Union

Telephone: (212) 867-8400

MAY 18 1987

May 7, 1987

CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
● ACC Presses Fight Against Apartheid (87100)	1
● Boesak Challenges Anglican Meet (87101)	6
● Province Backs Browning Plea (87102)	9
● Province V Acts to Aid Nigeria (87103)	11
● New Lutheran Church Affirmed (87104)	13
● Chilstrom Elected to Head ELCA (87105)	15
● Radio/TV Foundation Hosts Ecumenical Seminar (87106)	17

ACC PRESSES FIGHT

AGAINST APARTHEID

by Ruth Nicastro

Diocese of Los Angeles

DPS 87100

SINGAPORE (DPS, May 7) -- The Anglican Consultative Council, as expected, has passed a strongly worded resolution condemning the apartheid system of South Africa and in particular decrying the present detention, without charge or trial, of many people, including children, in that country. However, the delegates, after fierce debate, refused to single out the Church of England and its vast holding for special attention.

Affirming its solidarity with all those suffering for a just society in South Africa, the Council asked church members to press their governments to put in place "effective sanctions" against the South African government, and to urge business and financial institutions to "disinvest and disengage from the South African economy."

Further, the churches were asked to ensure that none of their own financial resources were invested in any way which would support the present regime in South Africa.

-more-

DPS 87100/2

The Council asked member churches to continue their prayers and support for all the peoples of Southern Africa in their struggle for justice and peace and again called on the South African government to withdraw from Namibia in accordance with the the terms of United Nations Resolution 435. It also condemned the unprovoked aggression on some frontline states by South Africa.

Presented by the Christianity and the Social Order section of the Council, the resolution incorporated a memorandum to the section from the Peace and Justice Network which met here just prior to the ACC. Language on sanctions and disinvestment had been strengthened by the section after an address to the Council by Dr. Alan Boesak of South Africa, who also met with the section as consultant. (See DPS 87101)

As presented, the resolution singled out in a separate item the Church Commissioners of England, specifically calling to their attention the disinvestment sections of the resolutions.

English delegate John Smallwood, himself a Church Commissioner, stated that the Commissioners were required "by English statutory law" to serve their beneficiaries, principally the clergy and pensioners of the Church of England, and could not adopt policies which were "financially disadvantageous."

The Commissioners, Smallwood said, abhorred apartheid, had divested most of their holding in such companies and were continuing that process, so that less than five percent of their total portfolio was presently so involved.

Smallwood's statement engendered considerable debate, initiated by U.S. Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning. Browning said the issue was not the amount of investment a church had in South Africa, but whether it should have any investment at all. "Is the church across this global village going to be earning its income on a system based on injustice?"

The Very Rev. Frederick Borsch, also a delegate from the U.S., said that the Episcopal Church had been faced with a similar legal situation in the so-called "prudent man's law." The church, as well as other institutions, has challenged such law and had totally disinvested without being sued.

Kenyan Bishop David Gitari observed, "As Christians, we cannot obey every law, as we learned from St. Peter and St. Paul."

A point at issue seemed to be the vast size of the Commissioners' total portfolio, amounting to some 2 billion pounds sterling, so that whatever remaining amount was involved in South Africa was still sizeable. Australia's Alan Nichols made the point that particularly with such a large portfolio, the Commissioners were in a position to bring a heavy pressure to bear upon the companies in which they invest to stop doing business with the apartheid regime.

Prevailing sentiment appeared to favor the resolution as drafted until Archbishop Douglas Hambidge, Metropolitan of British Columbia, Canada, injected that he was unhappy with singling out a particular agency of one province. After several other speakers agreed, the sponsoring section withdrew the item, pointing out that England, like all other provinces, was called upon to disinvest completely by the main body of the resolution.

The resolution then passed the Council with no opposing votes and only one abstention, by Archbishop Donald Robinson of Australia.

Continuing concern for the welfare of Terry Waite, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for Anglican Communion Affairs, was expressed by the Council in a resolution which gave thanks to God for his courageous witness. Waite disappeared over three months ago while acting as the envoy of Archbishop Robert Runcie in negotiations for the release of hostages in Lebanon.

The council praised the church's courageous witness in his care and concern for the victims of injustice and oppression.

Noting with sadness the suffering of all the people in the Lebanon, it condemned the detention of innocent people against their will, there and in other parts of the world. The Council supported the Archbishop of Canterbury in his attempts to ensure the return of Waite.

Archdeacon Yong Ping Chung, Chairman of the Council, has sent a message to Mrs. Frances Waite conveying members' love and prayers. Waite, well known to members of ACC, has attended two previous meetings of the Council.

ACC-7 voiced its support for the first International Anglican Youth Gathering, which will be held at Stranmillis College, Belfast, from Jan. 3-8, 1988.

DPS 87100/4

Some 350 young people are expected to attend the Gathering, which will be hosted by the Church of Ireland. Before the conference, participants will stay with families in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

The Council also recommended that a newly-constituted Mission Issues and Strategy Advisory Group (MISAG-2) review the Church's mission. Such a review would acknowledge the multi-cultural society in which the church is set; encourage collaboration with other Christian bodies; and, since spiritual, social and physical elements are indivisible in Christian belief, link evangelism with development.

The Rev. Canon Colin Craston (Church of England) has been elected Vice-Chairman of the Anglican Consultative Council to serve at ACC-8, which will be held in Wales in 1990, and at ACC-9 in 1993.

The main work of the Council during the week has been carried out in groups, organized around the themes of Mission and Ministry, Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns, Ecumenical Relations, and Christianity and the Social Order. Each Section presented its initial reports to the full Council. These reports included the groups' discussion on the issue of Authority in the Anglican Communion. Current structures provide for meetings of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops every ten years, the Anglican Consultative Council every three years and of the Primates every three years. The groups' reports evidenced a need to review these structures. A special committee of the council was appointed to consolidate this aspect of the discussion and report back within a week.

###

(Editors: Text of the Resolution is attached.)

**CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL ORDER
RESOLUTION ON SOUTHERN AFRICA**

That this Council, re-affirming its belief that apartheid is an evil, racist system and recognizing the injustice and suffering it causes:

1. Condemns the detention without charge or trial of many people including children in South Africa, isolating them from their families; and further expresses support for those within the country who are protesting at this inhumane action;

2. Reaffirms its solidarity with all those who are suffering for a just society in South Africa in which the peoples of all races will share on terms of equality the responsibility of government and the full benefits of citizenship;

3. Encourages its member churches to -- (a) continue their prayers and support for the peoples of Southern Africa in their struggle for justice and peace;

(b) press their governments to introduce effective sanctions against the Government of South Africa until a genuine process of change in political structures is initiated;

(c) urge business and financial institutions within their jurisdictions to disinvest and disengage from the South African economy;

(d) ensure that none of their own financial resources is used to support the present regime in South Africa and for this purpose to disinvest from all corporations which have a financial stake in South Africa;

4. Urge the Government of South Africa to -- (a) bring the present State of Emergency to an end; (b) release without delay all political prisoners; including Nelson Mandela; (c) release without delay all those who have been detained without trial, especially the children; (d) enter into serious negotiation with authentic leaders of all races to prepare a new Constitution;

5. (a) Re-affirms resolutions on Namibia passed at ACC-6 expressing the Council's solidarity with the people of Namibia in their struggle for independence and calling on the South African Government to carry out the terms of United Nations Resolutions 435; (b) further calls on the Provinces of the Communion to report to the Standing Committee of the ACC on action taken on Namibia within their Provinces;

6. Affirms its solidarity with the frontline states in their efforts to secure a just solution to the problems of South Africa and Namibia and condemns the unprovoked acts of aggression on some frontline states by the South African government.

7. Directs the Secretary General to convey to the Archbishop of Cape Town, the Bishop of Namibia, the Secretary of the South African Council of Churches and the Christian Council of Churches of Namibia, copies of this resolution, together with an assurance of the Council's continued support for them and for those whom they represent at this critical time in the history of Southern Africa.

###

BOESAK CHALLENGES

ANGLICAN MEET

DPS 37101

SINGAPORE (DPS, May 7) -- Speaking to a plenary session of the Anglican Consultative Council meeting, the Rev. Dr. Alan Boesak asked the delegates, "Where and who is the church? And does it speak only in assembly? Only when its leaders draft a statement? Or does it speak when people take up the struggle for the voiceless, the poor and powerless?"

Boesak is president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Moderator of a branch of that church in South Africa. He was the third prominent, international, ecumenical leader to address the Council on the subject of "The Unity We Seek." He did so from the perspective of peace and justice, rather than from primarily textual and doctrinal approaches as had his predecessors, Roman Catholic theologian Nicholas Lash and Lutheran Harding Meyer.

The struggle for peace and justice is going on all over the world, Boesak said, with or without the approval of the church, which, in terms at least of bishops and synods, comes late to the struggle in many instances. The church as the people -- "the little peoples of God who have faith in Jesus Christ and his promises and the reality of the Kingdom of God" -- goes into the streets and challenges evil.

This struggle is not just complementary to the life and witness of the church, Boesak said; rather it lies at the center of discipleship. It is when "we leave the pulpit and the hallowed sanctuary and go into the streets and worship God there, through the sacrifices of our lives, that we are the church."

No one church can tackle the problems of peace and justice alone, Boesak said. It is the church ecumenical which should and must respond, and participate, and become united in the struggle as the church.

That is happening, very well at the local level, where people share daily the life and death matters of survival. He told of a time when he was arrested, along with 10 others, during a protest march. It had been a long day, and they were tired and hungry even before they were arrested. One of those arrested had brought along a cheese sandwich for the march, and another had a bar of chocolate. They gave these to Boesak and asked him to distribute them.

DPS 87101/2

"And so in prison, I did that, and we shared this bread and this chocolate," Boesak recalled. "And I thought to myself, 'Is it sinful to think that this is one of the most meaningful experiences of communion I've ever experienced?'"

Five Christian policemen guarding the 11 watched as they read scripture, prayed and ate bread and chocolate as communion. One need not worry about sacramental theology at such a time, this theologian said, because you cannot underestimate the power of the testimony that flows from such action.

Unity is also required at the international level, and within the councils of our own churches, where the truth is, Boesak said, we are often divided. The church too often becomes the refuge of the upper classes instead of the champion of the oppressed.

The question is, he said, "what price are we willing to pay for the unity of the church?" A unity based on a compromise with the Gospel is no unity, just as there is no unity without truth and without the integrity of discipleship.

Essential to achieving justice, Boesak said, is learning to be peacemakers. Advising his Anglican brethren on this matter, he said the first step was to stop handling war as a problem and begin seeking peace as an achievable goal. To do this we must master the techniques of peacemaking, rather than the techniques of making war. Churches have a vital role to play as teachers of peacemaking.

Boesak noted that in South Africa there is a whole generation of children who have known nothing in their lives but violence and death. "What will they be like when they grow up?" he asked. "We can't wait until the moment of liberation arrives to do this. If we wait (until the struggle erupts into a revolution), by the time we've waded through the rivers of blood, will there be anyone left with whom we can work and reconcile?"

Boesak left no doubt that he is himself committed to non-violent protest rather than bloodshed, although he acknowledged that almost all the non-violent campaigns have ended in massacre. "The only way we can get out of all this is to break the cycle of violence."

In an interview earlier that day, Boesak said the only thing which keeps him awake at night is that he is the one who must make the decision to stage a protest or a march. "When I do, I know that some will be hurt, and some will go to prison, and some will die. But we

must protest when we are told such nonsense as that we cannot pray for, or even think about these thousands of children that are being kept in prison." (He referred to more than 25,000 persons currently being detained in South African prisons, without charges or trial, 40 percent of whom are children.)

In a question period following Boesak's address, American Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning asked him how churches like the American church, which has declared its solidarity with those in South Africa fighting to end apartheid, could help?

Boesak replied that seeking an intensified campaign of "well targeted" international sanctions against the South African government was the thing which could finally bring the system to a halt.

RN

###

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

PROVINCE BACKS

BROWNING PLEA

DPS 87102

by Mike Barwell
Diocese of Southern Ohio

RACINE, Wis. (DPS, May 7) — Saying they would follow the request of Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning to maintain open dialogue on questions of sexuality, the bishops and delegates of Province V, representing 14 Episcopal dioceses in the Midwest, declined to endorse a sexual ethics statement endorsed earlier by the bishops of Province VII and Province IV.

Instead, the synod referred the statement and the issue of sexuality to the provincial executive committee for study and proposed that sexuality be the topic for the 1988 synod meeting.

The sexual ethics statement was brought to the annual Synod, meeting at the DeKoven Center here April 27-28, by the Rt. Rev. William Wantland, bishop of the Diocese of Eau Claire. Eau Claire's executive council, in a letter to the synod delegates, said they "applaud and affirm" the statement "which calls upon all our members to follow the biblical and traditional teachings of the church," noting that "God's intention for his human creatures lies in the union of male and female in marriage. Such marriage...is, by intention, faithful, lifelong and monogamous." The Eau Claire council urged synod endorsement.

The statement was debated by the provincial bishops during a closed bishops' meeting, in which the bishops could not reach agreement on endorsement, with several reportedly saying they could not, in good conscience, sign the statement because it was judgmental and discouraged full dialogue in the church. The bishops referred the statement to the annual business session for debate and a vote.

The reasons given by bishops and synod delegates for refusing to endorse the statement included honoring the request of Browning to wait for complete dialogue in the church before reaching conclusions about sexuality. Browning sent a letter to all diocesan bishops in April appealing for non-judgmental, open discussion in the church. Several synod delegates echoed the fear that the statement was judgmental and included "innuendos" about homosexual unions.

The sexuality statement comes on the heels of the controversial report from the Diocese of Newark and the ongoing studies of sexuality by a national church commission which will make recommendations to the 1988 General Convention in Detroit. The Newark report and state

ments by the Rt. Rev. John Spong, bishop of Newark, were widely reported in secular media earlier this year, which sent ripples throughout the Anglican Communion. Many newspaper reports highlighted the aspects of the Newark report which indicated that the church may, someday, propose blessing unions of people of the same-sex.

Delegates noted that the Newark report also dealt with blessing relationships outside marital union, including young couples living together before marriage in a "betrotal" situation, and elderly people who live together for companionship and whose economic situation would be adversely affected because pensions and social security payments could be cut off after marriage.

The Rt. Rev. Thomas Ray, bishop of Northern Michigan, opposed the statement, saying it was "judgmental against homosexuals, young couples and older people. Celibacy isn't the answer either," he said.

Many of the bishops and delegates noted during and after the debate and vote that, while they agreed the content of the statement, they had not had sufficient time to reflect on and debate that particular statement.

The Rt. Rev. Coleman McGehee, bishop of Michigan, said during the debates that Browning has clearly asked the church to remain open to dialogue. "As we open ourselves to this dialogue, for those of us who may be concerned, the position of the church is stated in the Prayer Book. The basic theology of the Prayer Book is the blessing of union between man and woman."

Bishop Roger White of Milwaukee called referral of the statement to committee "a cop out," noting that by the time the synod meets again to study the sexuality issue, the national church's report and recommendations to General Convention will already be determined.

In an interview following the debate, Wantland said he was disappointed because "there are thousands of people out there who are calling on this church to stand firm in its commitment to biblical principals. It is important to determine the context of ideal (behavior) and standards. And the standards must be there!"

Wantland said he was angered that the church would base its standard of morality on what is the norm in this "Godless, violent society."

He added that his concern in supporting the statement was not not to be condemnatory nor judgmental but rather pastoral, by "upholding standards and calling people to holiness and perfection."

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

PROVINCE V ACTS

TO AID NIGERIA

DPS 87104

RACINE, Wis. (DPS, May 7) -- Parishes in the 14 dioceses of in Province V will take a special offering to send emergency aid to the dioceses of their companion province of the Anglican Church in Nigeria.

In recent months, more than 100 churches and a seminary have been burned to the ground or seriously damaged in religious riots between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria.

The request for a special offering was made by the delegates of Province V, meeting here April 27-28, after the synod received a letter from Nigerian Archbishop T. O. Olufosoye appealing to all Christians in the companion dioceses and province to "pray for us" during the turmoil. But, for the first time during the ten-year companion relationship, he also appealed for immediate cash relief for rehabilitation, food, clothing and hospital charges. Province V and the Province of Nigeria are the only provinces in the Anglican Communion which have a province-to-province companion relationship.

"It is with sad heart that I report the religious disturbance in Nigeria...where many Christians were killed and many injured," the archbishop wrote to Bishop Edward Jones of Indianapolis, president of the province. "Our only theological college in the north, St. Francis of Assisi, has been burnt down and the students have fled. The expatriate vice principal has gone back to his homeland. Our automobiles have been set on fire. Some of our expatriate missionaries have gone back to their countries and the Christians of southern Nigerian origin have returned to the south.

"We now worship under the shade of trees in some places and the rain is coming. Our fear is in the problem of restoration of the churches burnt down; we may not be allowed to rebuild them on their present sites," he said.

Although unrest between the Muslims and Christians is not new, the latest outbreak of violence resulted in the banning of all Christian processions of witness on Palm Sunday and Good Friday and no worship at all in colleges, the archbishop said. The Anglican Church in Nigeria is growing rapidly, according to reports, and the riots and damage are a serious setback.

DPS 87104/2

"Our partners -- the Episcopal Church in the United States, Anglican Church of Canada, The Church of England...and Province V of the U.S.A. -- should kindly come to our aid urgently. Christians are suffering persecution here in Nigeria," he said.

Aid from parishes or dioceses will be directed through the Rev. Canon Samuel Van Culin of the Anglican Consultative Council.

MB

###

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

NEW LUTHERAN

CHURCH AFFIRMED

DPS 87105

COLUMBUS, Ohio (DPS, May 7) -- In the closing moments of the Constituting Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which met at the Ohio Center here April 30-May 3, a delegate called Convention's attention to the quote on a bronze plaque in the Center's atrium: "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." (Henry Ford)

As well as anything, those words summarized the general mood of the preceding days, which saw more than 1,000 delegates unanimously approve the constitution of the 5.3-million member denomination formed by the merger of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America. With this action and the election of a presiding bishop, secretary and vice president for the new church, the Convention brought to a close nearly five years of intense and sometimes difficult merger discussions. The new church, which has a start-up date of Jan. 1, 1988, will be based in Chicago.

The election of the bishop went to the full nine ballots, as Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom of the 290,000-member Minnesota Synod of the Lutheran Church in America defeated one of the incumbent bishops of the three merging churches, Presiding Bishop David W. Preus of the 2.3-million-member American Lutheran Church. The final vote was 626 to 411.

It was also a convention where women moved into leadership positions as never before in U.S. Lutheranism.

After the strong showing by the Rev. Barbara K. Lunblad, an LCA pastor from New York City, in the election for bishop, Bonnie Jensen of Minneapolis finished third in the balloting for secretary. Jensen is executive director of the ALC's women's organization.

Elected secretary was the Rev. Lowell Almen, editor of the Lutheran Standard from Minneapolis. Almen, 45, an ALC pastor, will set up a computer information system and data bank linking the Chicago-based church and its 65 synods and 11,500 congregations.

Finally, on the last day of the Convention, a woman was elected to a key church position.

-more-

DPS 87105/2

Christine Grumm, 37, an Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches' laywoman from San Francisco, was elected vice-president of the new church. Her main role will be to chair the ELCA's church council.

The convention also elected members to its boards and commissions using a formula that ensures a balance between clergy, laypeople, women, minorities and representatives of the three merging churches.

In other actions, the convention approved a budget of \$112 million and voted their "unqualified opposition to the apartheid system" and "the illegal occupation and oppression by South Africa of Namibia." Delegates also approved ongoing inter-church dialogues, including that with the Episcopal Church.

A minor incident Saturday afternoon marred the convention. Two defrocked LCA pastors, Daniel N. Solberg and D. Douglas Roth, tried to enter to convention but were stopped by security police and arrested. No one was injured. As the dissidents were being escorted from the floor delegates rose and, at the suggestion of the chair, sang Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

Before the constituting convention, the 2.9-million-member LCA was the only church body that needed to ratify the merger plans. The documents were approved by a 538-19 vote.

Present at the Convention as observers and speakers were the Rev. Ralph Bohlmann, head of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, which was not part of the merger, and the Rev. Gunnar Staalsett, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation.

Ecumenical guests included the Rev. William Norgren, ecumenical officer for the Episcopal Church Center; the Rt. Rev. William G. Black, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, in which Columbus is located; Dame Nita R. Barrow, a president of the World Council of Churches who represented WCC general secretary Emilio Castro; the Rev. Joan Campbell, executive director of the U.S. Conference of the WCC; the Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church in America; Roman Catholic Bishop William H. Keeler, head of the ecumenical relations committee for the U.S. Catholic bishops; Dr. Avery Post, president of the United Church of Christ; and the Rev. Arie Brouwer, representing the National Council of Churches.

###

CHILSTROM ELECTED

TO HEAD ELCA

DPS 87106

COLUMBUS, Ohio (DPS, May 7) -- In electing Herbert W. Chilstrom of the Lutheran Church in America to head the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, that Church has chosen a man who has lived with Lutheran merger on the home front -- his wife, Corinne, is an ordained a pastor in the American Lutheran Church. The third group involved in the merger was the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

The 55-year-old Minnesota native was elected on the ninth ballot of the Constituting Convention, held at Ohio Center here, April 30-May 3, by a vote of 626 to 411 over Presiding Bishop David Preus of the American Lutheran Church. The first ballot saw 67 people nominated, including two women, one of whom, Pastor Barbara Lundblad of New York City, ran an unexpectedly strong fourth.

Within his own Minnesota Synod, Chilstrom has a reputation for openness and being a reconciler, and indeed, he played a similar role as a bridge-builder on the 70-member Commission for a New Lutheran Church, which was formed as a result of 1982 resolutions by the three merging bodies to work toward union. In a press conference following his election, Chilstrom said his greatest challenge now is to bring the new church "into some sense of unity."

According to Lutheran sources, Chilstrom was raised in the "high-church" and somewhat pietistic background of the mostly Swedish Augustana Lutheran Church, which merged with the United Lutheran Church in America to form the LCA in 1962. Referring to his background at the press conference, he stressed his belief in the value of both sacramental and personal testimony. He also noted that the Lutheran Church has a history of ethnicity but that this is changing. In his acceptance speech, he referred to the "well-ordered German and stolid Scandinavian" stock and said he had learned much from the "inclusive" emphasis in the ELCA. He then addressed three questions to the black, Hispanic and other minority delegates: "Will you pray for us?," "Will you pray for other elected officials [of the new church]?" and "Will you pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit?" All three got a resounding "yes!" from the delegates.

DPS 87106/2

An area in which Chilstrom, who has been a bishop for 11 years, confessed some lack of experience was in wider ecumenical dialogue. He does, however, support dialogue, which he believes works best when groups share while maintaining their individual identities. The bishop drew chuckles from his hearers with the statement, "Jesus didn't command us to go and make Lutherans of all nations."

Chilstrom also spoke of the importance of his family life and mentioned his and Corinne's three adopted children, one of whom, Andrew, committed suicide at age 18 in 1984. Of that tragedy, Chilstrom said, "We found that the theology we had been living with was valid. Whatever mistakes we made, we are living under grace."

###

RADIO-TV FOUNDATION

ACTS ECUMENICAL SEMINAR

DPS 87107

by Barbara Braver
Diocese of Massachusetts

ATLANTA (DPS, May 7) -- Style rather than substance gets the emphasis on television. There is more note taken of appearance, ("The President looked tired,") or presentation, ("The President's delivery was halting,") than on what the President might actually have had to say. Further, television gives the viewer lots of content that never connects up. Consequently, children who spend many hours every day in front of the TV getting one information blip after another are not learning how to make those connections. Putting facts together to make sense and draw conclusions is thinking, and television is teaching our children not to think well.

Harsh words these, and they are those of one who is himself a skilled practitioner of the medium: Dr. Jimmy Allen, president of the Radio and TV Commission and ACTS Satellite Network of the Southern Baptist Convention. Television has an important role in religion, he says, but it is limited. "The gospel has a fantastic image content, perfect for television, but how can you talk about the atonement if you only show the cross?" Though television, he firmly believes, can be a valuable adjunct to participation in a church community, it is not meant to be a substitute for a local congregation.

Allen was the keynote speaker for a Church in Media seminar held here April 23-24. The Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation, Inc., was the host, and the Fenner-French Foundation was the sponsor of the event. According to the Rev. Louis Schuëddig, executive director of the Foundation, the purpose of the gathering was to give the board and staff an opportunity to see their efforts as part of the broader network of Christian communicators. To this end, several executives responsible for the television efforts of their particular communion, as well as people from the television medium, were invited.

"A landmark event", was the description of Dr. William Fore, executive director of the Communications Commission of the National Council of Churches in New York. He moderated a panel on "Christian Communications Today: The Denominational Overview." Participants were

DPS 87107/2

from nine churches, including the Episcopal Church, which was represented by Sonia Francis, executive for Communication. She noted that the Executive Council has identified communications as a top priority, and that Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning believes that media should be used in a "pro-active way".

Though the television ministries of the religious bodies represented vary widely, mainly as a function of funds available, common themes emerged. The importance of cooperation was touched on repeatedly. Television is an expensive business, making working together both desirable and cost effective. It was also agreed that communication should not be thought of as just another budget line item. Communication is not an end in itself, but a support to all other church efforts, such as evangelization and education.

Advice for church communicators in getting their message out to the broadest possible television audience came from five media professionals. "Avoid self-serving messages." This injunction came from Dr. Russell Barber, Producer of Religious Programming for WNBC-TV in New York. He said that he does not believe that this is "a very good time for religious programming," and that he himself is part of a "vanishing breed."

Larry Cummings, president of Cummings Media, cautioned church people not to be "floaters," which he defined as "so heavenly bound they are no earthly good." Practical planning is as important as creative vision. Churches must create communications strategies and stick.

The Atlanta-based Foundation, founded in 1945, has a 26-member board of clergy and lay persons from around the country. The Board is chaired by the Rev. Martin R. Tilson, recently retired rector of St. Luke's, Birmingham, Ala., who is now director of planned giving in the Diocese of Alabama. Former chairman was the Rt. Rev Harold B. Robinson, retired Bishop of Western New York.

###